

Lepidopterology *—No description of a Species valid without a Figure.

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This further portion of the *Lépidoptérologie comparée* has recently appeared. It contains nine pages on the "Relations of Lycænids and Ants"; 170 pages, continuing the "Notes pour servir à établir la Faune française et algérienne des Lépidoptères," with the *Chelonides* (*Arctiidae*); certain supplements to previous "Notes," 16 pp.; 76 pp. "Documents concernant les *Somabrachys*"; and a dozen on "Subspecies et Morpha." Though there is perhaps less to specially interest the British Lepidopterist than in Part IV., all our British Arctias are fully discussed, with various items mentioned that are not familiar to insular collectors; the range of variation of *Euprepia cribraria* (*cribrum*), for example, of which most forms are illustrated in the beautiful pl. lxxx.

The plates, 27 in colour, drawn by Monsieur Culot, are up to his usual superb merit, and must be seen to be appreciated. Two of them are from drawings by Mr. H. Powell, of the early stages of *Somabrachys*, and there are four photographic plates of *Somabrachys* imagines, illustrating Mr. Powell's and M. Holl's most interesting account of this curious genus, of which about eighteen species are dealt with, largely the discoveries of Mr. Powell and M. Holl, only two being given in *Staudinger's Catalogue* (1901). The volume presents much matter that we should like to transfer to these pages did space permit. It seems, however, more immediately important to discuss the point that M. Oberthür has insisted on for many years, and which he proposes to bring before the Entomological Congress at Oxford next year. He expresses the position thus: "Sans bonne figure à l'appui d'une description, pas de nom valable; dès lors la priorité du nom appartient au premier Iconographe plutôt qu'au premier Descripteur." This proposal ought to be well considered before the Congress assembles. M. Oberthür says that for his part he has already decided to treat descriptions without figures as of no account; he rejects them as mere lumber. Still he would not press the point absolutely, and so he proposes figuring those species of Guenée that are so far only descriptions.

Apart from their often indeterminate character, the time required to wade through a number of descriptions is in the present day almost prohibitive. The really strong point for accepting M. Oberthür's proposition is that figures can now be made so much more cheaply and accurately than not so many years ago. Still we are not all able to secure the assistance of a M. Culot, and a bad figure may be worse than none. It seems, therefore, that the minimum to be demanded is really a good photograph, which is by no means costly, and except colour, shows all that is really essential.

It seems necessary, also, to fix a date after which this law shall be absolute, such as, say, twelve months after the Proceedings of the Congress are published. The more difficult and knotty point is whether, and if so to what extent, the law shall be retrospective. It seems reasonable that where no doubt has been raised as to names,

* *Etudes de Lépidoptérologie comparée* par Charles Oberthür, Fasc. v. (1re Partie), pp. xxxvi., and 340, pl. 41.

retrospective action should not take place, but where any doubt arises, the name should lapse unless fortified by a figure within the next, say ten years. Without some such provisoes as these, and probably one or two others, to pass the law simply, would perhaps rather add to than clear away the confusion at present arising from the want of figures. To give plates of types hitherto unfigured, as M. Oberthür proposes, is extremely desirable, and should be done by all who possess such types, or even know where they are. An excellent example of this is Mr. Hamilton H. Druce's *Illustrations of African Lycaenidae from type specimens in the Berlin Museum*. (Still earlier Rothschild's and Jordan's *Revision of the Lepidopterous Family Sphingides*.—H. J. T.)

In Section V., the introduction of the terms "Subspecies" and "Morpha" is objected to, and we are entirely in agreement with Messrs. Oberthür and Alphéraky that as synonyms, of which we already suffer from a plethora, of "geographical race" (var.) and of "form" (forma) respectively, their use is to be sincerely deprecated. We may, however, say that we are almost pleased, as a proof that we are not entirely dominated by his superior personality, to find ourselves in disagreement with M. Oberthür as to one ground of objection to the term "subspecies." He objects because the word implies a theory. If a name be given to something not already supplied with one, we accept it as the name of that thing, without caring, or at least attaching serious value to the question, whether or no it suggests a theory, sound or unsound. As examples take *Ruralis betulae* or *Lacosopsis roboris*. Even astronomers talk of sunrise and sunset, though the mere man in the street knows that the theory they suggest is erroneous.

Some Moorland Thrips.

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The Natural History Society of Northumberland, Durham and Newcastle-upon-Tyne held their week-end field meeting this year in the upper Coquet-dale, with headquarters at Harbottle, a charming village about ten miles from the nearest station, Rothbury. Thus an excellent opportunity was given me to study the Thysanoptera of the Northumberland moors.

It was rather early for the heath and the heather, which was only just breaking into blossom, but the somewhat isolated clumps were crowded with thrips and their larvæ, most conspicuous amongst them being the white-barred *Aeolothrips fasciatus*, L., though the two smaller species, *Euthrips ericæ*, Hal., and *Oxythrips parviceps*, Uzel, were more numerous represented. But best of all was the capture of the minute and wingless *Amblythrips ericæ*, Bagnall, a genus and species described early this year from five Yorkshire specimens. By repeated search this insect was found to be of wide distribution, but scarce, less than 30 specimens being ultimately secured. *A. ericæ* is only a little more than half a millimetre in length, and is rather difficult to distinguish in the field from the larvæ of the larger forms. It has, however, an air of distinction, and, unlike the sluggish larvæ, moves about with some alertness and without the hesitation so evident in the former. In colour *Amblythrips* is tinged with reddish-brown,